



NEWS RELEASE



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Building for the Future; USACE completes Al-Mazraa School

By Ron Elliott
Gulf Region District



The new Al-Mazraa six-classroom elementary school in Ramadi, which replaces an old two-room house, includes administrative offices, playground, guard house, backup generator, a security wall around the entire school property and a supply of necessary school furnishings. This new facility will accommodate 200 to 300 students and teachers. (GRD Photo by Ron Elliott).

RAMADI, Iraq – The future of Iraq lies in the hands of its youngest citizens, and the future of those children lies in their ability to get a quality education.

The Gulf Region District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Iraq recognizes this important connection and places a high priority on the construction and renovation of schools as part of their reconstruction mission in Iraq.

With more than 1,135 school projects completed and operational, USACE finished and turned the Al-Mazraa elementary school in western city of Ramadi over

to the Iraqi Ministry of Education this week.

Paul Ijames, project engineer for the Al-Mazraa School and several other schools in Al-Anbar province, has been overseeing a variety of essential service projects in Iraq over the past 18-months.

"I've been involved with many things, but school projects like this are right at the top of the list since they provide many children access to an education they would otherwise not have been able to get," said Ijames.



Mr. Paul Ijames, Gulf Region District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers project engineer (center) along with Lt. Col. Richard Pratt, GRD Deputy Commander (r) and Command Sgt. Maj. Gregg Phillips (l) conducts final inspection of one of the classrooms prior to turning the completed Al-Mazraa Elementary School over to the Iraqi Ministry of Education. This new school will accommodate 200-300 students and teachers. (GRD Photo by Ron Elliott).

"We're making a difference in people's lives," he added.

According to Ijames, one of reasons this project was so exceptional was due to the pride the Iraqi workers continued to display throughout the construction of the school.

"It's their children, nephews and nieces, and other kids residing in that neighborhood who will be going to school there. They now have a good environment in which they can learn."

The new six-classroom school, which replaces an old two-room house currently being used as a school, will accommodate 200 to 300 students and teachers. The school complex also includes administrative offices, playground, guard house, backup generator, a security wall around the entire school property and a supply of necessary school furnishings.

Local leaders, residents as well as the children are excited about the completion of the new school.



Hamed, a 7-year-old Iraqi boy, and his friend both who will be students at the new school, stand at the entrance of the school as GRD conducts final inspection of Al-Mazraa Elementary School. Currently, both boys are attending school in an old, two-room house. The new six-classroom elementary school in western city of Ramadi will accommodate 200 to 300 students and teachers and includes administrative offices, playground, guard house, backup generator, a security wall around the entire school property and a supply of necessary school furnishings. (GRD Photo by Ron Elliott).



The playground of the new Al-Mazraa elementary school in Ramadi. The new six-classroom school, which replaces an old two-room house currently being used as a school, will accommodate 200 to 300 students and teachers and includes administrative offices, a guard house, backup generator, a security wall around the entire school property and a supply of necessary school furnishings. (GRD Photo by Ron Elliott).

Hamed, a 7-year-old boy, and his friend both who will be students at the new school, stood at the entrance of the school and said with a big smile, "This will be my school; thank you for giving me a new school."

Beyond the bricks and mortar, schools like Al-Mazraa, represents an investment in the future of Iraq--its children.

"You can see it in the smiles of the local residents who are diligently working everyday to provide a brighter future for their children and grandchildren. They know

that the key to success is hard work and education. Just like in the United States, their schools are the heart of their community – a place for hope," added IJames.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Iraq has completed thousands of reconstruction projects in partnership with the U.S. Government and the Government of Iraq. Since 2004, USACE has completed 5,257 projects throughout Iraq valued at more than \$9.1 billion, and has 350 projects ongoing.

The Gulf Region District, headquartered in Baghdad, Iraq is a joint effort comprising Civilians, Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Contractors.

GRD provides quality and sustainable engineering in support of civil/military construction in Iraq. GRS and its Iraqi partners are building a strong foundation for Iraq's future.

BUILDING STRONG® is the official slogan of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

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